



Pre-Homework Mindfulness Interventions at Poughkeepsie Middle School

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Introduction

-Mindfulness is defined as, “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145).

- Mindfulness-based practices that are usually delivered in person for 30-45 minutes sessions have been associated with higher levels of student attentiveness, focus, and well-being (Broderick, et al., 2012).
- Despite the vast research conducted on mindfulness and its impact on primary and secondary level students, the effect of brief mindfulness exercises delivered through a virtual medium is currently unknown.
- This study examines the effect that 10–15-minute mindfulness interventions have on emotions, focus, distraction of tutors and at-risk youth.

Abstract

Marist’s Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP) is a dropout prevention and college access program for at-risk youth in Poughkeepsie. The study explores the effects of mindfulness-based pre-homework interventions with LPP student and tutor participants. The grade of the student participants ranged from 5th to 13th grade, and the data was collected on six different occasions, virtually. Tutors reported statistically significant improvements in emotional experience, focus, and a decrease in distraction during homework help sessions preceded by brief mindfulness-based practices.

Study

Participants

- A total of 14 respondents ($n_{female}= 11, 78,6\%$ and $n_{male}= 3, 21,4\%$) completed the survey at least once, of which 9 were picked as a final sample. 5 tutors (45% of $n_{totaltutors}= 11$) and 4 adolescent students (26% $n_{totalstudents}=15$).

Materials and Procedure

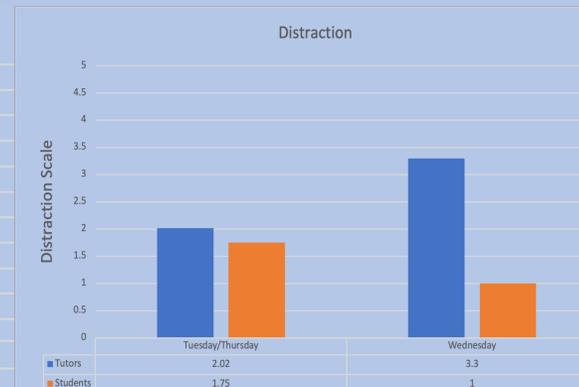
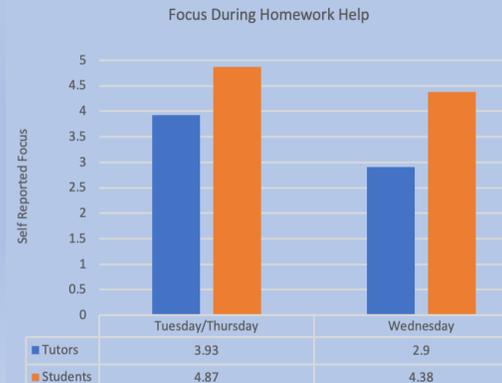
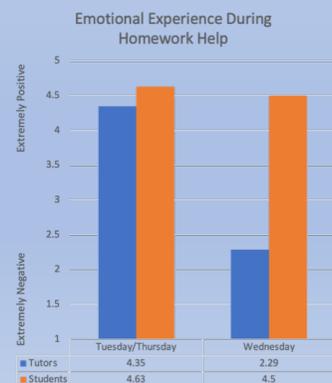
- Mindfulness interventions were delivered on Mondays and Wednesdays before the homework help session to tutors and students, where participants attending Wednesdays, session did not receive intervention and functioned as a control group.

Results

- There was a significantly higher (i.e., more positive) emotional experience for tutors ($M = 4.35, SD = 0.49$) compared to days were no mindfulness-based interventions were offered ($M = 2.90, SD = 0.22$), $t(4)=0.24, p = 0.82$.
- There was a significant improvement regarding self reported focus for the tutors on mindfulness days ($M = 3.93, SD = 0.48$) compared to non-mindfulness days ($M = 2.90, SD = 0.55$); $t(4) = 6.395, p = 0.003$.
- Tutors reported significantly less distraction on mindfulness days ($M = 2.02, SD = 0.66$) than on non-mindfulness days ($M = 3.30, SD = 0.97$); $t(4) = 2.92, p = 0.04$.

Discussion

- Tutors benefited significantly in terms of emotions, focus, and distraction following engagement in brief virtual mindfulness interventions.
- The results suggest that brief online mindfulness practices may be more effective for tutors than middle- and high school students.
- The lack of effectivity for students may be credited to a multitude of reasons:
 - The students participating in the research already went through mindfulness training, but the tutors didn’t.
 - The student's reported data was either extremely high or low across all days resulting in a potential ceiling and floor effect.
 - The amount of distraction experienced by participants is different, for example: a low-income student may have to deal with more distractions than a privileged college student.
 - The tutors may also have benefited more, because of their more developed brains and the ability to focus on the exercises longer.
- Further studies should conduct research with larger samples and an in-comparison group to validate the findings and differentiate between potential alternative explanations.



References

References available upon request by contacting: ante.dany1@marist.edu